

BED BUG FACT SHEET

Bed Bugs are small dark brown insects that hide in the home environment during the day and bite people at night in order to consume blood. Bed bugs do not transmit disease through their bites, but the bites may be itchy, irritating or embarrassing to people. Bed bugs are spread from one household to another when they 'hitchhike' on luggage, clothing, furniture or bedding. Bed bugs are becoming more prevalent in the United States. They can be found in any setting regardless of whether it is clean or dirty.

CAUSES: *Cimex Lectularius*

SYMPTOMS: Bites that appear overnight, usually small, hard, swollen white welts accompanied by severe itching which can last several days.

SPREAD: Bed bugs can be found in mattresses, box springs, bed frames and couches, as well as luggage, clothing and backpacks, where they hide in the seams. They do not fly but will run quickly across the floor, wall or other surface. They are spread when an infested item is moved from place to place.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: Not contagious.

EXCLUSION: Children living in households that have bedbugs do not need to be excluded.

REPORTABLE: *Parents:* Inform your childcare provider if your child shows signs of bed bug bites.

PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. Do not allow the sharing of personal items such as towels, bedding, cloths, coats or backpacks.
2. Hang clothing in individual lockers, or on assigned hooks which are spaced so that they do not touch.
3. Once bed bugs have infested an area treatment by a professional exterminator is necessary. Sometimes multiple treatments are required. Vacuum and steam clean all carpeting to a minimum 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Launder all clothing and bedding at a minimum 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Items that cannot be laundered may be bagged and placed in a hot, sunny place at a minimum 120 degrees Fahrenheit for a two weeks. Items may also be held below freezing for two weeks.
4. Use of second hand furniture, particularly beds and couches, is another way these insects are spread. Be very careful when purchasing or receiving used furniture.



Lincoln Trail District Health Department

BED BUGS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What are bed bugs? Bed bugs are small, flat insects, usually brown or reddish-brown in color. Bed bugs are typically about 1/4 inch long. Bed bugs do not fly, but can quickly move across floors, walls and other surfaces. They are typically active at night.



Where are bed bugs found? Bed bugs are typically found in luggage, clothing, bedding and furniture. They can live in almost any crevice or protected location. Bed bug infestations are common in places where people come and go frequently, such as hotels, motels, dormitories, shelters, apartment complexes and prisons. Unlike many other pests, bed bugs are not prevented by clean conditions, and can be found in places that are frequently and thoroughly cleaned.

How do I know if a place or item is infested with bed bugs? Bed bugs typically infest mattresses, box springs, bed frames and couches. These areas usually have dark spots and stains from the dried excrement of the bed bugs. Another sign of bed bugs is rusty or red spots of blood on bed sheets, mattresses or walls. Heavy bed bug infestations may also have a musty smell.



What do bedbugs do to humans? Bed bugs require blood to survive. To get this nourishment, they often feed on humans. Bed bugs usually bite people at night when they are sleeping, and feed on any area of exposed skin, such as the face, neck, shoulders, arms or hands. The amount of blood lost by humans to bed bugs is minimal. The bites do not hurt, so the person usually does not know that he/she has been bitten, but bed bug bites do irritate the skin. People with bed bug bites may develop a small, hard, swollen white welt at the site of the bite. The welts are accompanied by severe itching that usually lasts a couple of days. Anxiety and restlessness are also common in people who have bed bug bites.

Do bed bugs spread disease? Bed bugs do not appear to transmit diseases. The greatest threat from the bites in humans is the swelling and inflammation at the site of the bites, which can lead to secondary bacterial skin infections. The bites can be treated with antihistamines or over-the-counter cortisone creams. Check with your health care provider to determine which treatments you should use.

How do I know if I've been bitten by bed bugs? Not all bites or bite-like scratches are due to bed bugs. If you wake up with itchy bites that you did not have when you went to sleep, then you may have bed bugs. To confirm if the bugs are present, a professional will most likely have to identify them.

How are bed bugs spread? Bed bugs attach to luggage, clothing, beds and furniture, and move when and where those objects are moved. Bed bug outbreaks can most often be traced to travel, particularly travel in a country where bed bugs are common. Use of secondhand furniture, particularly beds and couches is another way bed bugs can be spread. You should be very careful when purchasing or receiving used beds and couches, and should avoid all furniture left sitting at the curb.

How can I keep from getting bed bugs? Once bed bugs have infested an area, treatment by a professional exterminator is necessary. However, you can prevent bed bug infestation in the first place by:

- Watching for the signs of bed bugs when you travel by examining the bed sheets and upper and lower level of the mattress for signs of bed bugs and then sleeping elsewhere if you suspect infestation.
- Making sure to keep your suitcase off of the floor when traveling.
- Not using secondhand beds, mattresses, box springs, couches and furniture, particularly if you don't know where it came from.



If bed bugs have infested part of my house, how do I get rid of them? Once bed bugs have infested an area, treatment by a professional exterminator is necessary. The exterminator may use a combination of insecticides to kill off the bed bugs. The insecticides are applied to all areas where the bed bugs are discovered, or where they tend to crawl or hide. In many cases, multiple applications are necessary to completely rid the infested area of bed bugs. In apartments and hotels, nearby units may need to be treated as well. Furniture and related items, as well as heavily infested bedding or clothing, may need to be thrown out. Vacuum and steam clean all carpeting to a minimum 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Launder all clothing and bedding at a minimum 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Items that cannot be laundered may be bagged and placed in a hot, sunny place at a minimum 120 degrees Fahrenheit for a two weeks. Items may also be held below freezing for two weeks.



I thought bed bugs weren't a problem in the U.S. Why are they a concern? Bed bug infestation was common in the U.S. prior to World War II, but the use of DDT (a chemical insecticide) in the 1940's and 1950's caused bed bugs to all but vanish from the U.S. Because of safety concerns, DDT is no longer used for pest control, and many people use baits to control ants and cockroaches—these baits are not effective on bed bugs. An increase of international travel, particularly to areas of the world where bed bugs have remained prevalent has also led to an increased prevalence of bed bugs in the U.S. However, bed bugs are still rare when compared to other household pests.

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